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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on musical theater in the high school in British Columbia. It gives a rationale for incorporating musical theater in secondary schools, exploring the impact that a theater program may have on the music program, teachers, students, and community. Further, the paper presents a detailed guide to the process of producing a musical. Following the results of a survey of high school teachers in Vancouver, British Columbia, that elicited their views on producing musicals in school and their motivation for becoming involved, the paper concludes that the benefits to the secondary school and students are many, and that musical theater should be part of a well-rounded program. The paper is in 11 sections: (1) Introduction; (2) Musical Theater--Choosing to Get Involved; (3) Choosing the Musical; (4) Scheduling the Musical; (5) Organizing a Production Team; (6) Budgeting the Production; (7) Auditions and Casting; (8) Rehearsal Schedules; (9) The Rehearsal Process; (10) Sound Reinforcement; and (11) The Performances. A summary concludes the paper. Thirteen references are attached. Appendixes contain a sample questionnaire, recommendations for high school musical productions, an audition form, and a parent acknowledgement form. (SR)

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# *Producing Musical Theater for High School*

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1990

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## ABSTRACT

This paper focusses on musical theater in the secondary high school. A rationale for incorporating musical theater in a secondary school is given. The impact that a theater program may have on the music program, teachers, students, and community is explored as part of this rationale. The writers conclude that the benefits to the secondary school and students are many, and that musical theater should be part of a well rounded performing arts program. Reference to a questionnaire that surveyed performing arts teachers is made in order to include the views of other practising teachers. A detailed guide to the process of producing a musical production is also presented. Topics include such things as selecting an appropriate musical, budgeting, scheduling rehearsals and performances, and the rehearsal process itself.

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# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

One of the unique aspects of music education in the school today is the multitude of approaches an individual teacher can incorporate in his or her music program to engage student interest and to further an appreciation of the performing arts. While various teachers' approaches to music education may differ, surely a common trait most teachers of the performing arts wish to instill in their students is a love of the arts as well as a sincere respect for those who participate in them.

> Many educators still contend that the proper way to educate laypersons in the arts is by showing and telling them about the great works. But others in the last two decades have become increasingly convinced that an arts experience must be participatory.[1]

Through participating in bands, choirs, small ensembles, and general music classes, many of the students with whom music teachers are in contact will begin to develop an affinity to the arts which will be sustained through adulthood. Teachers act as catalysts in the development of student interest, and their ability to project a love and enthusiasm for their subject area is paramount. Certainly the teacher who can generate excitement towards the subject area will succeed in heightening student interest.

While this may all seem obvious, what might not be so evident to prospective teachers and practising teachers is the areas in which their expertise and communication skills will prove most effective. We all have assumptions concerning where our personal teaching strengths lie. However, due to teaching circumstances, stimulating colleagues, and self-discovery, the music director may

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[1] David Rockefeller, Jr. ed., *Coming to Our Senses -- The Significance of the Arts for American Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1977), p. 129.

find alternate avenues of music education that will prove to be rewarding and effective in meeting educational goals.

Musical theater is one such avenue in which the writers have become involved. Through this involvment he has found that this medium offers the students many unique experiences. During his university education the principal writer was not involved in musical productions, nor were there any course offerings directly related to musical productions available. Due to circumstances at the school in which he teaches, musical theater became an integral part of the music program.

Eric Hamber Secondary had always been noted for its large music program, but the development of a strong musical theater tradition was due in main part to the growth of the drama department, under the direction of a drama specialist. In the music department little was known about directing and producing, and the drama teacher knew little about music instruction. Thus the combination of backgrounds allowed for the discovery of the excitement of high school musical theater.

At Eric Hamber the principal writer has been involved as music director in nine musical productions. The productions have become annual events and are now a traditional part of the school year. Hamber has produced a variety of shows, from Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado* to the very contemporary *Working* by Studs Turkel, as well as an original production, *Family Portrait*. While these musicals have varied a great deal in style and theme, the knowledge gained through each effort has improved efficiency and ability to develop a quality end product.

Ideally, this paper will be able to function as a resource for a person who is entertaining the idea of producing musical theater. It will focus on the production from the music director's perspective. During the body of this paper referrals will be made to responses to a questionnaire that was sent out to other Vancouver high school teachers. The questionnaire (see Appendix A) asked some basic questions about their approach to musicals including rehearsal time, budget, miking technique, time involved, and staff participation. In addition, the questionnaire results describe both the teachers' concerns regarding the impact musical productions have on the rest of their programs, and their motivation for becoming involved in high school musicals.

The questionnaire was not used as a statistical instrument. Rather, its purpose was to provide the writers with additional information regarding the status of musical theater in the Vancouver school system. It allows for some interesting observations which have been referred to in the body of this paper.

## CHAPTER II

## MUSICAL THEATRE -- CHOOSING TO GET INVOLVED

### Opportunity Costs

Music educators in British Columbia have a great deal of flexibility in designing their music programs. While there are course curriculum guides outlining specific skills and content to be covered, some of the most rewarding work is not necessarily found in the required course content, but rather in the extracurricular activities which become such a major part of the music teacher's working day.

Evaluating how to spend these extracurricular hours is an important process. As in any decision making process, there are always "opportunity costs" to consider. Using one's time to concentrate on one area obviously takes from the time and opportunity available for working on another.[1] Being involved in a musical production carries major implications regarding these opportunity costs. Our questionnaire revealed that teachers may spend anywhere from fifty to over one hundred hours during the course of a production, which may span 3 to 6 months. This does not take into account the number of hours they spend contemplating the different aspects and problems of the production, or the sleepless nights when they are unable to extinguish that big opening number from their minds. In any case, the "opportunity costs" can range from rehearsal time with the extracurricular performing groups, preparation time for course work, to the loss of valuable time spent with one's family.

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[1] Don Leet and Joanne Driggers, *Economic Decisions for Canadian Canadian Consumers* (MarkamOnt: Wadsworth Publishers of Canada, Ltd., 1984), p. 5.

## Negative Effects on the Music Program

Family relationships aside, let us look at some of the possible negative effects on the music program itself. With one exception, the respondents to the questionnaire felt that a production did at times hinder the day-to-day operation of the music program. The final two to three weeks of intensive rehearsing appeared to be responsible for cancellation of other performing groups' extracurricular rehearsals, and a decline in teaching effectiveness in the classroom. Depending on the severity of this problem, one might be concerned about the attrition of students in the program, and whether or not other performing group members can endure some neglect without losing interest. It is very probable that many choir and band students will be involved in the musical production, either as members of the cast or pit orchestra, so while your other performing groups may lose some momentum, certainly the benefits to the students involved are compensation. None of the teachers indicated a crippling effect on their program, and in the principal writer's experience, any damage done is quite superficial and short-lived.

The teacher new to a school is advised to take a year or two to stabilize the music program before making the large time commitment needed for a musical. Without the foundation of a secure music program, developing musical theater will prove to be extremely difficult.

## Positive Effects on the Music Program

Equally important in this decision making process is evaluating the benefits that a musical production may provide instructors, the students, and the school's music program.

### *Administrative viewpoint*

According to the questionnaire, many administrators see the annual musical production as a very effective public relations vehicle. The musical can be a showcase for the school, and will probably be the school event that will draw the largest community audience.

Considering the very positive light such an event sheds on the school, it is little wonder that school administrators encourage teachers to participate. It is important, however, that teachers participate for their own enjoyment and personal growth. While there is little doubt that administrators can exert more than a subtle pressure on individual teachers to organize extracurricular activities, the bottom line is that it is still the teacher's option, and his/her choice to proceed should be exactly that. Of course, for an untenured teacher the decision may be somewhat colored by considerations of job security.

### *Personal satisfaction*

Personal satisfaction should be a major factor in choosing to participate in a musical. There is no doubt that the musical can provide a sense of accomplishment equal to or greater than any other musical activity with which the teacher may be involved. Most of the satisfaction is derived from viewing the

growth of the students who participate, and seeing their excitement and sense of accomplishment during rehearsals and performances. The musical production also allows instructors the opportunity to work with students who are not enrolled in their courses. As the old saying goes, "a change is as good as a rest", and it truly can be very refreshing for the teacher to meet new faces.

The isolation and insulation from the rest of the school life that music teachers sometimes work within can be altered via the musical. For the duration of the musical's preparation, it is likely that many other staff members will at one time or another become involved. This again exposes the teacher to new faces, and provides an opportunity to see and appreciate the many skills and talents that exist on a school staff.

*Student development*

Student development through musical theater is another consideration. As in team sports, bands, and choirs, there are certain personality traits that teachers hope to see the students develop through their participation. Self-confidence is one such trait. Even those students who progress no further than the audition will have some growth in this area, and will be better for the experience. For those students who endure the long rehearsal schedule and performances, their positive shift in self-confidence can be quite remarkable. Such was the case with a male lead in Eric Hamber's *Pajama Game* production. This student was the only male who could handle the difficult vocal parts of his character. He had little self-confidence and, during rehearsal, was very self-conscious on stage. Over the course of the production he not only developed a variety of new skills, but became a much more self-assured young man. This will certainly carry over into the many other areas of his school life, and can only be

considered a very positive change in his character.

As in other activities that require a team approach, the musical demonstrates to the students the need for self-discipline and group cooperation. As well, these productions bring students together who otherwise would not likely have any social contact with each other. A musical draws students from all areas of the performing and visual arts. Instrumentalists, vocalists, actors, dancers, artists, technicians, or any combination of the above, are an integral part of the successful musical. The participants become more sensitive to and appreciative of the unique talents of individual cast members and in general, the cast, crew, and pit orchestra will be very supportive of each other.

The experience of participating in a musical production helps to develop young adults who are much more aware of the many facets of the performing arts, and who will become a part of a community that will be a stronger supporter of the arts. Needless to say, long term friendships and fond memories, which are difficult to duplicate in other activities, are initiated during these productions.

*Building the music program*

"... any kind of educational institution or any group representing the sole theatrical exposure within a reasonably large area must, as a responsibility to both group members and audiences, provide a well rounded program of musicals and plays".[2]

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[2]Tom Tumbusch, *Complete Production Guide to Modern Musical Theater* (New York: Richards Rosen Press, Inc, 1969), p. 19.

It is important to also consider how one's involvement in a production can help the rest of the music program. Once again, respondents to the survey indicated unanimously that musical theater was offered in part to develop a well balanced fine arts program.

In most music programs, the students who choose to enroll in music courses have limited time to take other electives or participate in extracurricular activities. The musical provides band and choir students an opportunity to develop vocal, dance, and acting skills. It puts them in contact with interesting and creative people, and widens their perception of the performing arts.

The musical also provides students possessing little or no musical background with an exposure to voice and dance. In fact, the effect on a music program can be felt in a very tangible way. As mentioned previously, teachers questioned indicated there were some detrimental effects on the day-to-day operation of their music program. Interestingly enough, however, they also indicated growth in the fine arts enrollment as a direct result of producing musical theater. In the principal writer's music program, the effects of the musical have been reflected in steady growth in the choir program. Many of the students who have chosen to enroll in choir developed an interest in singing solely through their musical theater involvement.

While increasing enrollment may be a feature of musical theater, the major benefit to the rest of the music program is the sense of job satisfaction the instructor gains from involvement. This satisfaction is often generalized to the rest of the curriculum the instructor teaches.

## CHAPTER III

## CHOOSING THE MUSICAL

Having decided to take on the challenge that musical theater offers, a number of critical decisions need to be made, not the least of which is the choice of the production. Again, one needs to consider a number of factors in reaching a decision. One of the more critical factors in a school production is the cost.

### Royalties

Unless the musical considered is in the public domain, the royalty charges will take up a significant portion of the budget. Tom Tumbusch estimates that royalty costs for a musical run approximately six times the cost of a play of comparable quality.[1] The charges are based on the number of seats in the performance location as well as the number o performances one intends to present. If one was to consider a very contemporary musical such as *Cats*, the royalty charges would be prohibitive. The rule of supply and demand is quite apparent in musical theater. As long as the audience demands performances of *Cats* at its present level, the royalty charges will remain highly inflated. However for a musical that has passed its peak demand, an average cost for a four performance run in a 400 seat theater would be approximately $1000.00. If the musical was in the public domain, royalty charges would be eliminated, but the rental charges for the scores, chorus books, instrumental parts, and scripts would still be quite substantial. Gilbert and Sullivan productions are examples of those in the public domain and for that reason, plus their universal appeal, are often

[1] Ibid., p. 34.

performed.

Rental Charges

The rental charges for musicals also vary, but an average production rental cost would be $200.00. If one incorporates a larger cast, additional libretti will be required. A $10.00 fee per libretto is a standard cost. The rental for the materials is usually for only a two month period, so if one requires extra rehearsal time an additional $100.00 per extra month might be an expected cost.

Security Fees

In addition to rental charges a refundable security fee averaging $200.00 will be required. The total charges were $1500.00. These charges included royalties, rental and security fees. Please note that since one is negotiating with American companies for the majority of these contracts, all expenses are expressed in U.S. funds. It is the writers' recommendation to avoid any personal liability by asking the school administration to sign the contract.

Mailing and Other Cost Considerations

Depending on the urgency of receiving materials, mailing costs can also be exorbitant. Courier charges for delivery of the required materials for the *Pajama Game* production were $185.00. One must also analyze the cost of special costuming, set design, and lighting that will be required to produce the musical

being considered.

## Matching the Cast to the Musical

Cost aside, selecting an appropriate musical for the prospective cast is critical. If students are being asked to make such an extensive time commitment, it is the teacher's obligation to choose a production within the reach of their talents, and not one that will result in embarrassment or failure. "Give them a good show with embarrassing moments and the word of mouth will be of the embarrassment, not how good the show was." [2] If one is unsure of the ability of the students in the school, it may be wise as some teachers have indicated, to hold a general audition before choosing the musical. This allows an observation of the talent and depth of the cast, enabling the production team to make a more informed choice. Most respondents to the questionnaire indicated that they choose a musical before any audition procedure. As a rule this is also the writers' approach; however if it is to be a first musical, or if the teacher is new to a school, the "audition first" procedure should be considered.

Many musicals hinge on central lead characters, and if the teacher has senior students who have worked with him/her before, he/she will be quite aware of the choice options available to them. If the boys auditioning are relatively young and inexperienced then it would be prudent to choose a musical that focuses on female leads and chorus. Of course, in a situation such as that, one always has the option of inserting girls in boys' choruses or visa versa. This should be a last resort strategy, and while the principal writer did this with moderate success in his first production, *H.M.S. Pinafore* (Gilbert and Sullivan),

[2] Ibid., p. 34.

it proved to be rather confining.

The vocal skills of the leads and chorus certainly need to be considered. For example, *Pajama Game* or *West Side Story* have a predominance of unison singing, while Gilbert and Sullivan operettas are scored for complete soprano, alto, tenor, bass (SATB) choruses.

## Cast Size

The number of students the teacher wishes to involve can also influence the choice of musical. Some musicals can absorb almost any number of students into the cast and still work well, while others are designed to operate with only a limited cast. The advantage of the larger cast is simply the additional size of the potential audience. The additional tickets sold will be needed, however, to compensate for the added directional problems, and the cost to the production that comes with carrying a larger cast.

## Orchestral Scoring

One needs to consider carefully the orchestral scoring for the instrumentalists. Many musicals are written with awkward doubling and some fairly obscure instrumentation. How one will cover unavailable instruments or rearrange the parts to fit the musicians will need to be thought through carefully.

Many contemporary musicals are scored for small combo only. While on the surface this may appear to be a simpler alternative, it must be remembered that

the combo parts often require extensive "filling in" and improvisation by the musicians, which may not yet be part of the high school musicians' playing skills. The small combo does free more of the music director's time. The music director will also discover that the final rehearsals, when pit band and cast are brought together, will be much smoother.

## Matching the Musical to the Teacher

The writers have found on reviewing some prospective musicals that he would be uneasy coaching students through some of the content. While this is very subjective, it is important that one feels comfortable with the selection. On one occasion the musical *Grease* was under consideration. The lyrics, in the writers' judgement, were somewhat suggestive and crude, and while in outside theater he would be more than happy to participate in its production, he would have found it difficult to present in a high school setting. On the other hand, while the production of *Working* (Studs Turkel) contains coarse language and deals with some of the seamier sides of life, the story has a relevant social message, and with some very minor editing is a musical the writers highly recommend for high school. "Risque shows have a place in universities and little-theater production, but not in high school. However, what is risque may be a matter of local interpretation or might be successfully handled by directorial restraint or cutting."[3]

[3] Ibid., p. 34

## Matching the Musical to the Audience

The age and sophistication of an audience is a factor one might consider during the selection process. While a high school production's audience will have a large contingency of teenagers, the show's appeal must also be broad enough to encompass the many parents, grandparents, and family friends who will attend. "Shows that truly involve audience emotions appeal to people of all ages everywhere." [4] This being the case, the emotional attachment that the audience will experience should be a key consideration in selecting a show. A prime example of this was the principal writer's involvement in the production of *Fiddler on the Roof.* The school where the show was produced is in the heart of Vancouver's Jewish community, so there was little doubt that the show would draw strong support. In fact, *Fiddler* transends this cultural appeal to one much more universal. "For *Fiddler* is about the 'generation gap'. It is about the tradition-clinging older generation in conflict with a younger one far less concerned with the perpetuation of customs and mores than with today's living."[5]

## Sources of Musical Productions

Most schools regularly receive promotional material from the major sources of Broadway musicals. There are four major firms which act as the licensing agents for the majority of popular musicals, and it is through these that one receives the materials and performance contracts. These four firms are:

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[4] Ibid., p. 34

[5] Lehman Engel, *Words With Music* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1972), p. 7

MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL
MTI ENTERPRISES INC.
545 8th ave. New York, N.Y., 10018
Phone -- (212) 868-6668

TAMS-WHITMARK MUSIC
MUSIC LIBRARY,INC.
560 LEXINGTON AVE.
NEW YORK, N.Y. 1002
PHONE- (212) 688-2525
TOLL FREE 1-800-841-8408

SAMUEL FRENCH CANADA LTD.
80 RICHMOND STREET EAST
TORONTO, ONTARIO
M5C 1P1
PHONE (416) 363-3536

THE ROGER'S AND HAMMERSTEIN LIBRARY
598 MADISON AVENUE
NEW YORK N.Y. 1002
PHONE -- (212) 486-0643

As well as locating the source of these well known musicals, one may be surprised to find a number of original productions have been produced in one's area either by other schools or local theater groups, who may offer you performance rights for these productions at a nominal fee.

Another great help in choosing the musical is of course viewing as many productions as possible. As well as live productions, there is now a large library of taped productions that may be found at local specialty rental video shops. Many of the Public Broadcasting System productions of various musicals are now on tape and available for rent.

The local university or public libraries are valuable sources of information. Surprisingly enough, in Vancouver it is not the music library at the University of British Columbia that holds the most useful collection of relevant material, but

rather the main branch of the public library. The most useful books, in the writers' estimation, are those in which the author lists available productions and includes some editorialized production notes. Stanley Green, Tom Tumbusch and Carol Lucha-Burns have each authored books that address these topics.[6]

In her book, Lucha-Burns includes, along with each production listed, the following information: original production notes with performance location, original cast, and number of roles; production synopsis; a general overview of the story line; notes on the production: editorialized comments on such things as current relevance, difficulty, featured songs, and casting considerations; songs of special interest, a list of the more important songs of the production and a brief description of the style and features of the selection; and instrumentation, as well as a list of available recordings.

An example of the production notes for *The Pajama Game* follows.

> Tonys: Featured Actress (Carol Haney), Best Musical, Producers, Book, Music, and choreography.
>
> The show is enjoyable and well suited for school groups and communities and it has a variety of characterization opportunities and well-known songs. The production is easily costumed, but not really updated due to "Seven and a Half Cents" lyric requirement which allows $1,705.04 to buy a foreign car and $3,411 to be real wealth. There are various dialogue sections which refer to wages of eighty cents an hour.
>
> The part of Gladys requires an excellent dancer/comedienne while the roles of Prez, Hines, Mabel and Mae demand comedic character actors who move well. The "Steam Heat" number requires two excellent male jazz dancers and the leading players, Babe and Sid, need dynamism and powerful voices.

---

[6] Stanley Green, *Encyclopedia of the Musical Theater* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1976).; *The World of Musical Comedy* (London: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1974); Tom Tumbusch, *Guide to Musical Theater* (New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, 1983); Carol Lucha-Burns, *Musical Notes -- A Practical Guide to Staffing and Staging Standards of the American Musical Theater* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1986).

> The sets may be trimmed and the "Pajama Sampler" drop used to replace certain of the IN ONE scenes or used as a background throughout with set pieces placed to establish a definite location.
>
> All in all, it is a fun show worthy of more productions.[7]

Probably the most easily accessible source of information is fellow performing arts teachers. If a teacher is unsure of the merits or difficulty of a particular musical, he/she should not hesitate to contact a fellow performing arts teacher who has produced the show. This person can not only help in the selection process, but can also allow one the luxury of anticipating problem areas, saving both planning and rehearsal time.

Once an appropriate musical has been chosen, a great deal of rehearsal time will be saved. Nothing is worse than tackling a production beyond the reach of the production staff or students. The headaches of rearranging, making major cuts, and piecing it all together through marathon weekend rehearsals can only lead to frustration for both cast and teachers.

Ten musicals that have been particularly well suited to high school casts are listed in Appendix B. These recommendations were derived from our questionnaire and the writers' experience.

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[7] Ibid., p. 286.

## CHAPTER IV

## SCHEDULING THE MUSICAL

One area that needs careful consideration is the positioning of the production within the school year. As it is desirable to involve a large number of students and staff, one will need to select a time slot that will make it more likely that these people will be able and willing to participate. Here are some factors that may influence the decision.

### Choice of Musical

The production the teacher chooses to undertake may in fact dictate, to a certain degree, the time slot preference. A musically demanding production may require more extensive planning and rehearsing, making a mid-fall production impossible. A smaller scale musical such as *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* will allow much more flexibility in scheduling.

### Student Course Work Load

During the course of a production, a few participating students will have a tendency to lose some ground meeting the day-to-day responsibilities of the classroom, particularly in the final two weeks of rehearsals and performances. While students should never be permitted to use the production as an excuse for poor classroom performance, ideally these final two weeks should be placed at a time in the school year which will have the least amount of negative impact on

the student's classroom work. An appropriate time might be near the beginning of a school term which would provide a student enough lead time to regain any possible lost ground.

## Competing School Events

Every school calendar will be full of many scheduled events with which one should try to avoid conflicts. Those of most interest to the music director will be those events in which he/she will have to participate with concert bands, stage bands and choirs. Also, if the instructor wishes to remain politically astute, it is advisable not to conflict with any major athletic events. One does not wish to alienate his/her department through the setting of production dates that inconvenience other school departments.

## Competing Events Outside of School

The events that inevitably will clash with the production are the many band and choir festivals that begin soon after the new year and continue through the spring. There have been a few occasions in which the principal writer has found his groups less than ideally prepared for a festival due to a poor choice of production dates. It is possible to expend only so much energy, so the teachers involved must decide on priorities, and not over-extend themselves at the expense of the production, performing groups, or their health. Keeping the above factors in mind, let us look at different scheduling options available.

## Fall Production

The advantages of an early production are appealing. So many of the potential conflicts, such as grad preparation, band exchanges, spring sports and other competing activities, are immediately eliminated. More students will become involved as they have not yet committed themselves to team sports, or other school clubs or activities.

Unfortunately, the disadvantages are equally apparent. Rehearsal time will either be relatively short or extremely concentrated, and the choice of musicals in most cases will be limited to smaller scale productions. The pit orchestra musicians will lack substantial endurance, and in general will not be playing up to their potential for the year.

## Midwinter Productions

Once again, this time slot avoids most of the major conflicts with other events. It does allow more lead time providing for a more relaxed rehearsal schedule, and should allow enough time to produce a fairly demanding production. One disadvantage is the loss of momentum the teachers and cast may experience on returning from Christmas vacation, and the time restraint experienced as the performance dates quickly arrive after the holidays. The principal writer has found productions scheduled within a few weeks after Christmas to be quite successful, however, and would recommend this time frame.

## Spring Productions

This appears to be the most popular time of the school year for musicals, due mainly to the extensive organization and planning aspects of musical productions, which require a great deal of time before the actual rehearsal schedule is implemented. While the performances may get uncomfortably close to festival and band exchanges, early to mid-March performances should provide enough lead time for these other events. Coupled with the extra time a spring production affords the production team is the benefit of having musicians with that much more playing experience and endurance. A spring production is particularly advantageous to highly demanding musicals which may involve complex vocal and choreographic elements, as well as intricate set or lighting design.

It is not recommended to schedule performances beyond early spring, as later dates quickly run into more conflicts, and as the end of the year approaches the impact of impending final exams may understandably deter students from participating.

## CHAPTER V

## ORGANIZING A PRODUCTION TEAM

Having selected a musical to produce, one needs to have an organizational plan to get the production off the ground. Distributing the immense work load of a musical should be a main goal of this plan. As the responses to the questionnaire indicated, the bulk of this work load has a tendency to rest on the shoulders of a few key personnel; the director, musical director, choreographer, or in the worst case scenario, only one of these people. It is possible that someone may want this production to be exclusively his or hers and not wish the "interference" or help of others. If a teacher wishes to be able to maintain other areas of his/her program and mental health, it is imperative to share the many responsibilities of the production with other staff or community volunteers. "Even if one individual is the best expert in every step of production, he could never give his best to all the functions required to prevent a successful musical."[1] In Eric Hamber's most recent production, over twenty-three staff members contributed in some measure to its success. For some, the involvement may have been only a matter of a few hours, while others devoted a great deal of time to the production.

Listed below is a summary of job descriptions and responsibilities that, in an ideal situation, could be divided among a number of staff personnel.

1. Producer:
    a. Helps coordinate the many facets of the production
    b. Budget planning and control
    c. Ticket sales and pricing policy

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[1] Tom Tumbusch, *Complete Production Guide to Modern Musical Theater.* (New York: Richards Rosen Press, Inc., 1969) p. 49.

d. Issues and distributes complementary tickets

e. Chairing production and post-production meetings

2. Director:

In most cases, the director will be the drama specialist (if the school is fortunate enough to have one.) Along with the musical director, his responsibilities will be the most time consuming and the most critical to the success of the show. "By the very nature of the directing function there can only be one director, one head and one final seat of absolute judgement."[2]

The director's duties may include:

a. Casting (in conjunction with the music director and choreographer)

b. Setting rehearsal schedule

c. Staging, blocking

d. Coaching actors

e. Set design (in conjunction with set builder)

f. Lighting (if no lighting specialist)

3. Music Director

Depending on the production and the circumstance at the school, this position may be divided into two positions:

Pit Orchestra Director:

a. Recruits and auditions the musicians for the orchestra

b. Maintains separate rehearsals until the last 2 or 3 weeks

c. Conducts the orchestra and cast through the performances

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[2] Ibid., p.74.

Choral Director:

a. Casts musical (in conjunction with director and choreographer)

b. Rehearses chorus and individual vocal parts

c. Works closely with choreographer and director to plan suitable staging

d. May act as rehearsal pianist for choreographer

e. Communicates to orchestra director changes in such things as tempi and cuts

In many productions the orchestra and choral director will be the same person.

4. Choreographer

   a. Participates in auditioning process

   b. Works with director and music director to plan suitable staging

   c. Designs and rehearses choreography

5. Costume Coordinator

   a. Selects appropriate costumes

   b. Measures cast for sizing

   c. Oversees costume returns, etc.

6. Prop Coordinator

   a. Locates necessary props and furnishings

   b. Insures security and location of props during the show

   c. returns borrowed or rented items after final performance

7. Make-up Coordinator

   a. Purchases make-up

   b. Coordinates a make-up crew for dress rehearsal and performances

   c. Coaches crew and actors in make-up application

8. Lighting Director

a. Selects lighting equipment -- rents or buys appropriate equipment.

b. Designs lighting sequences and cues in consultation with director

c. May call the show (coordinates stage and lighting crew during performances)

9. Sound Crew Coordinator

a. Organizes a sound crew

b. Selects appropriate sound equipment (mikes, mixing board, amplifiers)

c. Analyzes mike positioning requirements and sound reinforcement requirements

d. Oversees sound production during performances

10. Stage Manager

a. Coordinates stage crew

b. Maintains behind curtain discipline

11. Set Designer/Builder

a. Coordinates construction of sets

12. Art Coordinator

a. Designs backdrops, etc.

b. Coordinates painting of sets

c. Oversees publicity posters and ticket designs

13. Publicist

a. Contacts local papers, radio and TV stations for publicity

b. Coordinates in school advertising

14. Usher Coordinator

a. Organizes a team of student ushers

15. Concessions Coordinator

a. Organizes student crew

b. Oversees food and refreshment sales during intermissions

16. Dress Rehearsal Coordinator

    a. Oversees distribution of tickets to appropriate audience

    b. Coordinates seating

The above list should be fairly inclusive, but it must be remembered that under the jurisdiction of the above personnel, there are a multitude of jobs with numerous responsibilities that are of great importance to the smooth development of the production.

The ability of those organizing the production to draw upon the time and talents of colleagues to undertake these jobs can be heavily influenced by the extent to which the administration values such productions. A supportive administrator can do much to provide an impetus for staff involvement.

## CHAPTER VI

## BUDGETING THE PRODUCTION

The development of a suitable working budget is, in large part, tied to the finances of the school. Obviously, the first production one attempts will carry the highest risk. Financial considerations such as potential audience revenue and hidden costs may be difficult to estimate. A conservative approach on an initial production is highly recommended. All of the support staff need not participate in the budget design. A few of the key personnel such as the directors and producer will probably be all that are needed. As with any budgeting one needs to allocate funds towards both fixed and variable expenses. The fixed expenses, such as royalties and rentals, should provide little room for error. Expenses in some of the irregular expense areas such as make-up supplies, costuming, set construction, and miscellaneous are more difficult to predict.

Needless to say, a source of revenue needs to be estimated to balance the expenses. Again, to allow for some margin of error, it is wise to make conservative estimates when predicting the show's audience appeal. There does not seem to be any consistent amount schools spend on their productions. Some are operated on a very limited budget while others seem to be able to absorb quite high expenses. According to our questionnaire, budgets ran from under $2000 to over $6000.

The administrator in the school will of course need to measure the financial risk in producing the musical. However, according to the questionnaire respondents, running a show in the black does not seem to be of paramount importance to most principals. Administrators are quick to see the many benefits to the students involved, and are also well aware that this medium can help build

very positive community relations.

On the following page is a budget designed for Hamber's 1988 production of *The Pajama Game*. The production team found that some costs such as costume expense were underestimated, and over the course of the production preparation, some capital equipment costs were accumulated. When considering the resulting deficit, it must be remembered that the capital equipment will be used for future productions.

SAMPLE BUDGET

| EXPENDITURES | ESTIMATED | ACTUAL |
|---|---|---|
| ROYALTIES AND SCRIPT RENTAL | $2000 | $2100 |
| SET AND PAINT | $1000 | $1285.52 |
| COSTUMES | $500 | $888.98 |
| SOUND | $500 | $462 |
| LIGHTS | $500 | $609 |
| MAKEUP | $400 | $195 |
| PUBLICITY | $50 | $35 |
| CHOREOGRAPHER | $800 | $800 |
| MISCELLANEOUS | $500 | $139 |
| TOTAL | $6250 | $6514.50 |
| ESTIMATED REVENUE | $6500 | $6367.27 |
| TICKET PRICE | $5 | |
| ATTENDANCE ESTIMATE | 1300 people | |
| NET LOSS | | ($147.23) |

## CHAPTER VII

## AUDITIONS AND CASTING

The audition procedure and casting of a production may very well be the most difficult chores of the stage director, music director, and choreographer. They require a thorough knowledge of the book and vocal score, as well as flexibility and compromise when it comes to final casting decisions.

### Open or Closed Auditions?

One question in the survey asked whether or not the school's auditions were open to all students, and if lead roles were assigned only to students who auditioned specifically for them. The responses indicated that, in most cases, the auditions and lead roles were open to all students who auditioned. One teacher responded that his auditions were open only to the senior grade students. This would certainly speed up the audition process in the principal writer's school, as at least thirty percent of the students auditioning are in grade eight or nine, and from those students there are often only two or three students selected for the production.

There are a number of reasons, however, why students from the junior grades should be encouraged to audition. First, it may be of considerable benefit to the show if a grade eight simply has the talent and maturity deserving of a major lead or chorus role. Second, the audition itself provides a learning experience beneficial to all students, particularly those in the junior grades. They will prepare and perform material in front of their peers, and deal with all the excitement and anxiety this process entails. As mentioned earlier, it can provide

a small step in building self-confidence, and introduce some students to the reality of failure. "Rejection at an audition is not the conclusion of anything, only the end of a single exploration." [1] Interestingly enough, the students who fail to receive a part in their junior grades do not seem to be discouraged from trying out in following years. In part, this is due to the positive atmosphere that should be present during the audition. While the process cannot help but be competitive, the students should be encouraged to be very supportive of each other. At the principal writer's school, after a student auditions, no matter what level of ability is demonstrated, he or she will receive an enthusiastic round of applause from the others auditioning. The student will also observe basic truths about the work ethic. It soon becomes evident to most that the students who go to the most amount of effort in preparing their audition material are most likely be invited to "call backs".

Restricting lead roles to those who audition exclusively for them can also save a great deal of auditioning time, but once again this may be at the expense of the show's quality, Many of the students who audition may be only moderately aware of their abilities, and would never think to audition for a lead role. If the lead roles are open to all who audition, these potential leads will not be overlooked.

## The Auditioning Process

Listed below are the steps of an auditioning process which the writers have found to be effective.

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[1]Lehman Engel, *Getting the Show On* (London: Collier MacMillan Publishers, 1983), p. 61.

*Introductory meeting*

Initially, all those students who are interested in participating in the production attend an informational meeting. At this time, the students need to understand the type of time commitment that a musical production requires. It is important that they receive a fairly accurate indication of the number of afternoons and evenings that rehearsals will involve. Once they come to a realization of the time involved, some students will decide not to pursue a role. It is far better to have them withdraw at this stage rather than after casting has taken place.

At this introductory meeting, the stage director and music director will distribute copies of selected sections of the script and vocal parts to be used at the audition. The script selections would include dialogue between lead characters which will indicate how those auditioning will play opposite one another. The vocal parts should include short segments from three or four lead and chorus selections, giving the music director an opportunity to listen for vocal range and character.

After distributing and briefly teaching the materials to the students en masse, they are asked to sign up for audition times the following week. (One hundred to one hundred and fifty students audition yearly at Eric Hamber, a process which requires at least five days.)

*The preliminary auditions*

On the given audition date, the students are once again reminded of the time commitment involved before the casting begins. Each student is then asked to fill out a small information form for the benefit of the auditioners (see

Appendix C). Only the students auditioning that day are permitted to observe the auditions of their fellow students. It is important for the auditioners to plan some strategies to make the audition as rewarding an experience as possible.

1. Create a positive atmosphere: Compliment the students on their decision to take a risk. Encourage the students to be supportive of each other. Be positive in all your post-audition comments. Try not to create a situation in which the student may be humiliated.
2. Give equal time to all: Each student should be given an equal amount of time to demonstrate his or her talent, even if the music director realizes after a single bar of singing that there is no possibility of that student receiving a part. Nothing will be more demeaning than to make the less talented student's audition obviously shorter than another's.
3. Try to maintain a neutral attitude: While the auditioners should be positive, it is also important to maintain a very evenhanded approach towards all the students. Try to demonstrate an appearance of sincere interest toward all the candidates. Be sensitive to the anxiety which the student is likely experiencing before and during the audition.

The writers have found that it is unnecessary to have the choreographer present at the initial audition. This stage provides an opportunity for a basic screening process, and the choreographer's input is far more important during "call-backs".

During this stage, the music director and director must make a very quick analysis of the student's potential. Each is looking and listening for many similar elements in the audition. The focus of their attention on these elements will vary depending on their area of expertise. Some of these areas of focus may include:

1. Stage presence: Does the student have the ability to project personality on

stage? What is his/her physical appearance on stage? Does the student project energy and enthusiasm on stage?

2. Vocal projection: The ability to project the spoken and singing voice is a vital consideration. At least one of the auditioners should be positioned in the hall where the presence or lack of projection will be clearly evident.

3. Vocal quality: More often than not, the roles being auditioned for will not require an exceptional singing voice, but rather a vocal quality that helps to create the character portrayed. In *The Pajama Game* the role of Sid is the only one in need of a "pretty" voice. In fact, most of the remaining roles would be disastrous if cast with students capable of singing only with pleasant tone and correct enunciation. Referring to such songs, author Lehman Engel states that they can be "... blockbusters and explode in their scenes, provided they are sung as character exclamations and not as beautiful songs -- at least in the traditional sense."[2] The student one chooses for a lead in musical theater, therefore, may quite possibly be someone the music director would never consider for a madrigal ensemble. As Glenn Loney states, "The stars in musicals are occasionally noted for their inability to sing."[3]

4. Vocal range: The music director can get a quick estimate of vocal range in the audition; however, he/she needs to be cautious in this regard. The principal writer has found many girls who display a big sound and interesting vocal quality during audition. Unfortunately, this ability often relies on an extensive use of their chest voice. If their vocal technique is limited and the part requires any singing above third space "c", their projection ceases to be effective and the tonal color drastically changes.

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[2] Ibid., p. 54.

[3] *Grollier's Encyclopedia*, 1988 ed., s.v. "Musical Comedy," by Glenn Loney.

5. Intonation: While the roles may not require exceptional vocal qualities, it is still essential to have singers who have accurate pitch discrimination.

As the auditions proceed, it may become difficult for the auditioners to accurately remember each individual after listening to a large number of students. It is recommended that each auditoner employ some kind of simple rating system, such as a 1 to 10 scale. This, in conjunction with brief notes, should provide sufficient information for later consideration. At the conclusion of the day's auditions, the auditioners should compare notes and begin eliminating candidates.

After this initial phase of the audition procedure one should be prepared to post the call-back list. At the principal writer's school over the last two years, there has been an unwritten policy entitling all "call backs" to be part of the cast. In past years when the audition procedure involved two or more sessions in order to cut the audition list, an undue amount of pressure and competitiveness was exerted on the students. The call-back process is now used only to make individual casting decisions rather than to further eliminate auditionees.

*Call backs*

At this stage in the process, the directors should have a reasonable indication of who is potential lead and chorus material. The audition time spent on individuals will probably be increased. As well as listening to individuals, more time is needed to watch potential leads play opposite each other. More script and vocal material will be reviewed. As well, each student will go through a brief audition for the choreographer. Unlike the first audition, it is impossible to give each student an equal amount of time at this session, and the emphasis will be on the potential lead roles.

It is important that the auditioners not become locked into casting decisions at this point in the process. The auditioners are well advised to take whatever time is needed to ensure that all possible casting permutations have been considered. In the writers' experience, the final cast selection has often been in sharp contrast to the initial hunches of the directors, and the patience, flexibility, and compromise of the selection team have proven to be valuable assets.

*Choreography audition*

Following their singing and acting auditions, the students will work briefly with the choreographer, who may choose to audition individuals and/or small groups of five or six students. A common approach is to teach a small segment of the show's choreography and to observe the ability of the students to pick up patterns, keep time, and work with each other. If the show involves some more complex numbers that feature dance, a further audition of potential dancers may be required. Authors Haller Laughlin and Randy Wheeler suggest some dance audition steps for the auditioner who lacks choreographic expertise.

1. Circle Walk: Have auditionees walk in a circle in time either to taped music from the show or a record of popular music. Have everyone start on the same foot and see who has a sense of rhythm and who can stay in step. Repeat using a slow run.
2. Basic Charleston Step: Have auditionees stand in rows, facing the choreographer, who can then explain and demonstrate this step. Stand with feet together. Step forward with the right foot (1), kick left foot (2), step back with left foot (3), and touch right toe behind left foot (4). Extend the right arm in front of the body with the left kick. Reverse the step, beginning on the left foot.
3. Simple Cross-step Combination: Have auditionees stand in rows across stage

with feet together. Step right, cross left in front of right, step right, cross left in front of right, kick right, step right and reverse, starting with the left foot. Then slide together four times to the right and reverse. Arms should be out to the side on the slides.

Use these steps with three different floor patterns (circular, backward and forward, side to side).[8]

Further Considerations Before Final Casting

1. Believability: For the audience to become emotionally involved in the story line of the production, a believable cast is necessary. For example, an inappropriate pairing of romantic leads could certainly undermine the best intentions of a production team.
2. Personality: Quite apart from the talents of the student, if he/she is an individual on whom you do not care to expend your extracurricular energy and time, then you should seriously consider excluding that person from the cast. Unlike in the classroom, the teacher here is volunteering his or her own time and should take advantage of the opportunity to hand pick the students based on such traits as reliability and cooperation. The unreliable student, no matter how gifted, is a liability the production team need not contend with. A student who is late or misses rehearsals will create extra stress on the teachers, and undoubtedly impair cast moral as well as the progress of the production. The reliable, consciencious, albeit slightly less capable student, is in the writers' opinion, a much more appealing cast member, and in the long run will be much more instrumental to the success

[8] Haller Laughlin and Randy Wheller, *Producing the Musical* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984), pp. 35-36.

of a show.

3. Leadership: While the teacher's role is certainly leadership oriented, the value of a strong student leader in the cast cannot be underestimated. Student leadership is a quality not exclusive to lead roles. In the principal writer's experience, leadership from one of the thirty chorus members can do much toward developing a cohesive, ensemble feel in a cast, and the student leader can be one of the show's most vital assets.

4. Academic record: Should this be a consideration or not? Should passing letter grades in other courses be a prerequisite for participating in the school musical? In the writers' opinion the answer to this question is "probably not". The musical may be, for some students, one of the few areas from which they can derive a true sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. Excluding these students from one of their few sources of success, in the mistaken belief that it will improve their academic achievements, is an uncalled-for punishment. In the writers' experience, participation in the musical can often provide the borderline student an impetus to remain enrolled in school, and complete his or her year.

5. Parental Support: Though the student has been informed during auditioning of the extent of the time involved in the preparation of the show, the message may not have yet reached the parents or guardians. Before accepting a student as a cast member, it is advisable to solicit the support of the parents or guardians through an acknowledgement form that the student is required to have signed and returned to the director. This form will outline once again the time commitment involved, and the rehearsal times the student would be expected to attend (see Appendix D). By signing the form, the parent is acknowledging their child's responsibilities and giving support to this activity. This will also encourage

them to schedule other activities, such as piano lessons and doctors' appointments, on non-rehearsal days.

## Final Decisions

Having considered the many factors that influence the casting decision, the choices may still be difficult to make. The choreographer may lobby for a particular student due to his or her dancing talents, while the musical director hears another student's singing voice in that role. While much of the auditioning may take the form of a committee process, the final casting should be left to one person. "It is imperative to remember that the director is the individual faced with the problem of projecting the whole and unified production to an audience. Even before casting, therefore, it should be established that the director's final word is law."[5]

[5] Ibid., p. 16.

## CHAPTER VIII

## REHEARSAL SCHEDULES

Another important pre-rehearsal task for the production team is the planning of the rehearsal schedule. This responsibility is usually assigned to the director. The goal of such a schedule is to estimate an appropriate amount of time in which the production team will be capable of mounting a quality production, without necessitating the addition of emergency rehearsals. It is the responsibility of the production team to ensure that the already substantial time commitment of the cast is not overextended. The musical is probably not the only activity these students are involved in, and it would be unfair to implement radical changes in the schedule during the course of the show's preparation. The writers would add that it should be made clear to the cast from the onset that the final two weeks prior to performance should be kept free for extended afternoon and evening practices.

### Designing the Schedule

The number of rehearsal hours required will obviously vary depending on the complexity of the production. The length and time of day for rehearsals must also be considered. The questionnaire demonstrated little consensus to the question on when the most effective times for rehearsals are. Yet, the majority of teachers chose to practise in the late afternoon and/or evening. It should be noted that none of the respondents used in-class time to prepare material for the production. A standard rehearsal schedule at Eric Hamber would incorporate four rehearsals per week, with most students being required to attend three. The

length of rehearsals would be two to three hours long, and as authors Laughlin and Wheeler note, "Non-professionals generally have neither the power of concentration nor the physical stamina for more than three hours of rehearsing until final run-throughs."[1] Lehman Engel believes the ideal rehearsal schedule in a school setting would be five hours of rehearsal daily divided over the dinner hour, and ten hours during the weekend, totalling forty-five hours, based on an eight week production schedule.[2] This is an unrealistic time burden on both students and staff and strongly suggests a more relaxed schedule distributed over twelve to fifteen weeks.

Effective use of time is an essential element of a good rehearsal. The schedule should help to eliminate wasted time by ensuring that the students scheduled for rehearsals are, in fact, necessary for those rehearsals. Through a close analysis of the show, the director will break down the production into small sections so that only certain groups are scheduled for particular rehearsal days. The director will also require consultation with the musical director and the choreographer to accurately estimate the time necessary for these sections. On any given day, two or three separate rehearsals may be taking place. The choreographer may be setting a chorus number, the director coaching leads, and the musical director rehearsing vocalists. The schedule must avoid people being scheduled in two places at once.

Since there is the distinct possibility that the rehearsals will run behind, the director should pad the schedule with extra hours of rehearsal to enable the production team to "catch up". Following is a fourteen week sample rehearsal schedule that was satisfactorily maintained in preparation of Gilbert and

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[1] Ibid., P.20.

[2] Lehman Engel, *Getting the Show On* (London: Collier MacMillan Publis, however, usuallyhers, 1983), p. 33.

Sullivan's, *The Mikado*, staged March 8-11, 1983. The numbers and letters in the schedule correspond to the selections or groupings of songs as listed at the outset of the timetable.

## CHORUS GROUPINGS

| | Male chorus | Female chorus |
|---|---|---|
| #1 | If You Want To Know Who We Are.<br>A Wandering Minstrel. | Comes a Train Of Little Ladies.<br>Three Little Maids. |
| #2 | Our Great Mikado.<br>Behold The Lord High Executioner.<br>As Some Day It May Happen. | So Please You Sir.<br>Braid The Raven Hair. |
| #3 | Finale Act 1 | Finale Act 1 |
| #4 | Mi-ya-sa-ma.<br>A More Humane Mikado.<br>The Criminal Cried. | Mi-ya-sa-ma.<br>A More Humane Mikado.<br>The Criminal Cried. |
| #5 | Finale act 2 | Finale Act 2 |

## LEAD GROUPINGS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A | If You Were Not To Ko-Ko Plighted. | Nanki/Yum |
| | The Sun Whose Rays. | Yum (solo) |
| | I Am So Proud. | Ko/Pish/Pooh |
| B | Brightly Dawns Our Wedding Day. | Nanki/Pish/Pitti/Yum |
| | Here's A How-de-do. | Ko/Nanki/Yum |
| | See How The Fates. | Mikado/Katisha/Pooh<br>Ko/Pitti |
| | The Flowers That Bloom. | Nanki/Ko/Yum/Pitti/Pooh |
| C | Alone And Yet Alive. | Katisha (solo) |
| | Willow, Tit-willow. | Ko-Ko solo |
| | There's Beauty In The Bellow Of The Blast. | Ko/Katisha |

## REHEARSAL SCHEDULE FOR THE MIKADO

| Date | Grouping | Week |
|---|---|---|
| November | | 1 |
| 15 | read play | |
| 16 | read play | |
| 17 | #1 | |
| 22 | A | 2 |
| 23 | #1 | |
| 24 | #1 | |
| 25 | #1 (stage with some of A) | |
| 29 | A | 3 |
| 30 | #2 | |
| December | | |
| 1 | #2 | |
| 2 | #2 (stage with some of A) | |
| 6 | B | 4 |
| 7 | #3 | |
| 8 | #3 | |
| 9 | #3(stage) | |
| 13 | B | 5 |
| 14 | Review #1,#2,#3, A (whole of Act 1) Stage and combine | |
| 15 | " (same as for the 14th) | |
| | Christmas Holiday | |
| January | | |
| 4 | choral review #1,#2, #3, A | 6 |
| 5 | stage, review #'s 1,2,3,A (whole of act 1) | |
| 6 | " (same as for 5th) | |
| 10 | B | 7 |
| 11 | #4, B | |
| 12 | #4, B | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 13 | #4, B (stage) | |
| 17 | C | 8 |
| 18 | #5 | |
| 19 | #5, C | |
| 20 | #5 (stage) | Sets finished and in place. |
| | Semester Break | |
| 31 | C,B | 9 |

February

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | #'s 4, 5, B, C (review stage of act 2) | |
| 2 | Act 2 stage | |
| 3 | Act 2 stage | |
| 7 | leads as needed | 10 |
| 8 | choreography Act 1 (polish) | |
| 9 | choreography Act 2 (polish) | |
| 10 | Bits and Pieces choreography Acts 1 and 2 | |
| 14 | leads as needed | 11 |
| 15 | run act 1 | |
| 16 | run act 2 | |
| 17 | run acts 1 and 2 (into evening if necessary) | |
| 21 | leads as needed | 12 |
| 22 | run acts 1 and 2 with band | |
| 23 | run acts 1 and 2 with band | |
| 24 | run acts 1 and 2 with band | |
| 28 | run acts 1 and 2 with band | 13 |

March

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | run acts 1 and 2 with band<br>props | |
| 2 | technical rehearsal; run entire show with props, costumes, lights, sound (evening) | |
| 3 | (same as for 2nd) | |
| 4 | (same as for 2nd and 3rd plus make-up) | |
| 7 | Dress Rehearsal 1:00 P.M. | 14 |
| 8 | Performance 8:00 P.M. | |
| 9 | Performance 8:00 P.M. | |
| 10 | Performance 8:00 P.M. | |
| 11 | Performance 8:00 P.M. | |
| 12 | sleep 24 hours and then bask in your glory | |

Rehearsals will begin at 3:20 and end by 5:30 p.m. Please be on time. Rehearsals in the last two weeks (12 and 13) will run into the evening.

## CHAPTER IX

## THE REHEARSAL PROCESS

The initial approach that the production team incorporates in its rehearsals will be instrumental in setting a tone for the entire production. The rehearsals should begin on time, be disciplined, and develop cast cohesiveness.

*Discipline*

A cast with initially poor rehearsal discipline will not magically develop good discipline during the running of the show. Discipline in all aspects of the production will need to be regularly reinforced from the outset. Rules concerning late arrivals and unexcused absences should be implemented and enforced where necessary, and may require the replacement of a cast member. The writers recommend that a list of potential cast replacements derived from the original auditions be maintained.

"Quiet, intelligent attentiveness", [1] as Lehman Engel so aptly states, is also an essential component of the disciplined cast. It lessens distractions and the accompanying stress for the teacher that can be so counterproductive during a rehearsal.

The writers has often observed that some initial discipline problems will be dealt with most effectively by the leadership of experienced cast members. They are in tune with the long range goals of the rehearsals, and will be quick to show their displeasure to novice cast members whose lack of discipline may jeopardize the quality of the production. The cast members should be reminded of the number of students who auditioned for the positions that they now are holding,

[1] Ibid., p. 121.

and that the cast's participation in the production is indeed a privilege.

*Cast cohesiveness*

Developing the cast's sense of ensemble is important. An ensemble mentality is one in which all cast members feel they are contributing equally to the success of the show. This sense of ensemble can be a direct result of the attitude that the production team reflects during rehearsals. If the chorus perceives that the director treats the leads as "The Stars", and that chorus roles are minor adjuncts to the leads' success, then little cast solidarity can be expected. No cast member should be treated with anonymity, and his or her contribution to the production needs to be acknowledged regularly.

*Initial rehearsals*

The first rehearsal should include all cast members. To enable the cast to develop an overview of the story line, a read-through of the script will be necessary. In addition, recordings of the vocal selections may be inserted during the reading. At a first rehearsal it may be useful to supply the lead cast members with copies of the recording for home practice. The music director should certainly not expect his/her student cast members to duplicate the professional voices from the recordings; however, these recordings can save time in developing initial interpretations of the songs.

*Vocal rehearsals*

Following the read-through of the script, and prior to any staging or choreography, the music director should conduct subsequent rehearsals that deal exclusively with the vocal selections. To help in developing cast cohesiveness, the music director should carefully choose the initial selection he/she teaches. It

should be one that involves the majority of the cast, and contains enough energy and drive to create a sense of excitement upon which subsequent rehearsals can feed.

All vocal rehearsals should begin with vocalises. Participation in the musical should provide the students an opportunity to develop their vocal skills. Basic warm-up exercises and instruction designed to develop proper vocal production will do much to help improve projection and eliminate vocal strain.

During the course of the production the music director will need to make a variety of decisions integral to the success of the show, not the least of which is the tempo settings of the vocal selections. If tempi need to be slowed, the original vitality of a selection may be lost. "It is the energy emanating from the stage that sweeps an audience into an emotional relationship with the show."[2] There may be a need for some compromise between the choreographer, pit orchestra, and the music director regarding tempi. Still, the importance of running a show at a quick pace must be of prime consideration.

Making musical cuts or alterations within a selection, or eliminating vocal selections altogether, will also require the music director's careful judgement. An example might be the music director who finds the SATB voicings in a selection very demanding for his inexperienced cast. Devoting extra hours of rehearsal to the passage may solve that particular problem. It may be at the expense of maintaining the production schedule, however. Another answer may be to reduce the voicings, allowing quicker mastery of the song. The music director would need to measure the above solutions against the value of maintaining the musical integrity of the selection. In the principal writer's experience, reducing a vocal

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[2] Haller Laughlin and Randy Wheller, *Producing the Musical* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984), p 41.

score will often improve the vocal projection as well as enhance the energy of a song.

In many cases, the musical may have extensive choreography that was inserted in the original production to feature some well known star, and not necessarily to add to the story line. In a case such as this, reducing the amount and/or complexity of choreography would be quite appropriate.

When considering more radical changes such as cutting an entire selection, author T. Tumbusch offers this advice. "Anything that does not advance the beginning to the end, or help establish a character, is filler that usually requires strong direction. If such fillers cannot carry their own and tend to drag the nonprofessional production, they should be eliminated."[3]

The musical director should be consulted closely before the staging and blocking of a musical number. The music director's input should help eliminate the choreographer's or director's tendency to direct a cast through a sequence of moves or choreography that make effective singing an impossibility.

As well as teaching the chorus, the music director also coaches the lead actors through their solo vocal material. While the stage director will stage and block these selections, the music director can help coach the student to "act the song". Be certain that the student knows " why the character he/she is playing is making that particular statement, what the motivation and dramatic necessity of the scene defined by the lyric consists of, where the action is taking place, when it is happening, and to whom it is being played."[4] It is also important that the

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[3] Tom Tumbusch, *Complete Production Guide to Modern Musical Theater* (New York: Richards Rosen Press, Inc., 1969), p. 67.

[4] Fred Silver, *Auditioning for the Musical Theater* (New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, 1983), p. 25.

student remains in character during his/her singing. For example, the character of an old woman, such as the grandmother in *Fiddler On The Roof*, cannot be maintained if, when she sings, the audience hears the pure voice of a sixteen-year-old girl.

Students may also incorporate inappropriate body movements during their singing. A common example of these may be movements of the head or arms during accented or down beats which may be repetitive and distractive to the audience.

*Pit orchestra rehearsals*

The pit orchestra (or band) will have a difficult time envisioning the fruits of its labour until the final weeks of rehearsals. The difficult nature of the music, however, should provide the students with both challenging and enjoyable rehearsals. As is the case with preparing any difficult performance material, rehearsing requires three basic elements:

1. individual practice
2. sectional rehearsals
3. rehearsals spread out over a long period of time

The music director will once again need to consider possible musical alterations. The majority of orchestral parts for musicals are arranged with professional players in mind, so it may be necessary to simplify parts. One needs to be particularly sensitive to the written ranges for brass players. While the student trumpeter may have a usable playing range above high "A", his/her endurance, intonation, and timbre in that range may be severely limited.

The orchestra may be lacking string players. However, many of those parts will have been also written into the upper woodwind parts. In many cases the technical demands placed on the woodwinds will exceed the high school student's ability and the parts will need to be be simplified. The musical director may consider covering some of the more difficult or obscure instrumental parts through the use of an electronic keyboard synthesizer, an instrument that can prove invaluable to today's music director.

The students playing in the pit orchestra are often taken for granted by the cast. During the first joint rehearsals they may be the target of undue cast criticism, as the many adjustments are made with their arrival. To avoid this, prior to the first joint rehearsal, the music director should prepare the cast for the numerous problems that will initially arise. It should also be made very clear to the cast how valuable the orchestra's contribution is, and sensitize the cast to the difficulty of the instrumentalists' task. The biggest fans of the orchestra should be the cast.

*Choreographic rehearsals*

All respondents to our questionnaire indicated that the choreography was a responsibility usually left to an outside source. The choreographer's fee may take a significant portion of your budget, ($500 -- $1000) so the choice of choreographer needs to carefully considered. Once again the experience of other schools will be a valuable source of names of respected choreographers.

The principal writer has had the opportunity to work alongside six uniquely talented choreographers. Each had surprisingly different approaches to rehearsals. For one, the choreography was carefully preplanned with every series of steps and movements ready to be taught. For another, the choreography was

generated in large part through an improvisational process involving student input. While the end results for both were effective, the principal writer found the improvisational process to be far more time consuming and frustrating. As in the vocal rehearsals, an essential element of the choreographic rehearsal is proper warm-up, in this case in the form of exercises. One choreographer the writers worked with devoted a number of rehearsals exclusively to basic dance instruction before any choreography was staged. While this was initially quite time consuming, in the long run it allowed the students to grasp steps and movements at a much quicker rate as the dances were set.

Most choreographers prefer to work with a rehearsal pianist. As music director, the principal writer has usually taken on this responsibility. It not only allows the music director to stay intimately involved with the production, but also allows these rehearsals often to serve both vocal and choreographic needs. With the music director's participation, additions and deletions can be immediately dealt with, and tempi will remain consistent at all rehearsals.

The rehearsals are not unlike those of any other performing group. The choreography is taught in short segments and then pieced together. There is constant repetition and regular review of the selections. The choreographer must work within the abilities of the students. He/she should also have the ability to create choreography that features the more capable students. The stronger dancers may also aid in the instruction of the choreography through leading extra sectional rehearsals.

One characteristic of some professional choreographers is their desire to make use of all the original choreographic sections. The desirability of this depends on the length of the musical and the abilities of the students. Once the

choreographer has set the dances, it may be very difficult to convince him/her that a portion or all of a dance is expendable. To avoid this potential conflict, prior to the design of the dance sequences, the music director and stage director should have already decided upon major choreographic cuts.

*Stage Director rehearsals*

"The stage director is the artistic head of the production."[5] As a result of this responsibility, his/her direction will be a fixture at most rehearsals. Exceptions to this would be the orchestra, choral only, and initial choreographic rehearsals. While the director's role is all-encompassing, there are fundamental rehearsal objectives towards which each stage director will strive.

The development of characterization is a primary role of the director. He/she must develop the student's concept of his/her character, and provide an atmosphere in which the student can feel at ease in experimenting with this development. The director the writers have worked alongside will often employ an improvisational exercise to aid in this objective. He will take two students playing opposite each other, present them with a scenario, and ask them to improvise a short scene as viewed through the eyes of their characters. Their ability to develop the character though improvisation can then be transferred to the prepared script.

"It is the the director's responsibilty to make sure that the actors, singers and dancers are capable of extending their characters from the nonmusical sections of dialogue through the lyrics, melodies, and dances that continue and

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[5]Lehman Engel, *Getting the Show On* (London: Collier MacMillan Publishers, 1983), p. 39).

expand the characters in a show."[6]

A constant concern of the director in a school production is the development of character concepts in the chorus. The students will often view their chorus role as a "non-acting" part, and the director needs to dispel this false assumption. Developing the chorus characters, and maintaining them while on stage, requires concentration from the first rehearsals. The director must also constantly monitor and develop student skills concerning ennunciation, projection, and intonation. The choreographer will set the major dance selections; however, due to the director's complete grasp of the show, he/she is best suited to block its non-musical segments and stage the solo numbers.

The pacing of the show is also the director's responsibilty. As previously mentioned, much of the energy of a musical can be lost through improper pacing. The speed of stage movement, dialogue, and set changes can all contribute to a polished show. While pacing problems should always be a concern, they may not become obvious until full one and two act rehearsals take place.

As rehearsals progress and more personnel become involved, the director's responsibility will focus on coordinating newly involved personnel (lighting and stage manager), props, and set construction as well as rehearsing the cast.

In order that the director can adequately explain his/her concepts and needs to the appropriate personnel, stage diagrams illustrating such things as set, lighting, and sound requirements are a necessity. The schematics in the appendix illustrate, from an above stage view, six set requirements for *Pajama Game*. These would be duplicated and used by the stage crew. As well, the

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[6] Haller Laughlin and Randy Wheeler, *Producing the Musical* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984), p. 37.

students in charge of props would use duplicates, adding to the diagrams all the prop requirments for particular scenes.

In summary, the stage director is the production's source of creativity. In delegating responsibilities he/she needs to allow the assigned personnel to use their expertise to fulfill those responsibilites, with little or no interference. At the same time, it must be remembered that the democratic process is not implicit to a musical production, and that the stage director's decision is final.

*Final rehearsals*

The goal of these final rehearsals is to improve continuity and introduce other elements of the show step by step. The production team will find the last two weeks of rehearsal the most rewarding, as well as the most frustrating. Just when the show's continuity is forming, another element of the production is introduced, interfering with that continuity.

Introducing the pit orchestra involves a great deal of adjustment by all involved. This, in all probability, will require a very long rehearsal that will be a test of everyone's patience. Tempo changes, conductor-cast communication, and the presence of foreign sounds will all contribute to the problems that arise. One option for this rehearsal is to rehearse cue to cue. This involves the cast delivering the dialogue immediately before a musical selection, singing the selection, and then delivering a brief portion of dialogue following. By eliminating the majority of dialogue and non-musical movement, more time can be devoted to adjusting to the orchestra.

Listed below are the elements of the production that need to be introduced during the final two weeks of production in the order that the writers view as

most suitable.

1. Completed scene construction and furniture
2. Sound reinforcement equipment in place
3. Props
4. Lighting
5. Costumes
6. Costumes and make-up

*Technical rehearsal*

Once again, this rehearsal will be an endurance test. Lighting cues, sound cues, and any other technical problems are dealt with at this rehearsal. There is little time spent on refining the performances by the cast.

*Post-rehearsal feedback*

After each of the final three or four rehearsals, it is important that the director offer immediate feedback to the performers and crew. The director, who will have made extensive notes during the rehearsal, will discuss the strong and weak points scene by scene, making suggestions for improvements and alterations. These are the last opportunities for the final refinement of details. Any significant changes in blocking or choreography at this time would allow too little time for the cast to adjust and could spell disaster.

# CHAPTER X

# SOUND REINFORCEMENT

The high school production team does not always have ideal locations for their performances. Due to acoustical problems inherent in the performance area, and the less developed projection skills of student performers, sound reinforcement is often necessary. The principal writer has seen a variety of sound equipment employed, some more satisfactorily than others. In this chapter some basic suggestions will be given concerning effective sound reinforcement.

## Performance Location

The size and acoustical qualities in the performance location are important considerations. If one is in an intimate two hundred seat theater, sound reinforcement may not even be necessary. The majority of school productions, however, take place in auditoriums ranging in size from five hundred to a thousand seats. Others may be staged in the gymnasium. An initial consideration in the large auditorium is to reduce the distance the sound needs to travel by making the physical space smaller. At the principal writer's school, which has an eight hundred seat auditorium, heavy ceiling-to-floor curtains are hung the entire width of the hall, effectively halving the physical space. The acoustical benefits are immediately apparent. In addition, the curtains provide the auditorium with a more intimate theater atmosphere.

## Sound Reinforcement Components

There are five basic components necessary for an effective system. These are: microphones, mixer/preamplifier, power amplifier, equalizer, and speakers. Some of these components such as the mixer/preamplifier, equalizer, and power amplifier may be combined into one piece of equipment, simplifying the set-up. The more powerful the amplification equipment, the more effective the results. The power requirements will vary due to performance location. If one presently has equipment that is under-powered, it is usually possible to rent amplifiers that can be interconnected, effectively increasing the power.

## Location of the Sound Equipment

In order to properly monitor the sound levels the sound crew should be positioned near the back of the house. As the amplification equipment may be some distance from the microphones, it will be necessary to use a "snake" cable. This single cable is designed to connect to a number of microphones, eliminating the need for numerous cables running the length of the auditorium. All cables need to be secured by heavy tape.

The speakers should be placed forward of the stage. Depending on the size and configuration of the speaker set up, it is advised that they be elevated a few feet to enable the sound to be cast beyond the front rows. If more speakers are available, one might consider positioning a pair on the sides, in the middle of the house, to further enhance the sound reinforcement.

Microphone Recommendations

Choosing the most effective microphone is often hindered by financial considerations. Many schools presently have quite sophisticated sound systems for stage bands and swing choirs, but the microphones normally employed by these groups are insufficient for musical theater. The most popular solo microphones, which are considered by many an industry standard, are the "Shure SM 57" and "SM 58" models. These microphones are ideal for close proximity pick-up, but due to their limited range, the majority of blocking for a musical would need to be confined to extremely restricted stage areas.

A category of microphones referred to as "shotgun mikes" are much more suitable for theater use. The name "shotgun" refers to the mikes' ability to pick up sounds from more distant and broad locations, just as a real shotgun is able to spread its shot over a wide area. They require a power source other than the power amplifier for their operation. Batteries in the mikes themselves or a separate power pack may be used. The battery option is recommended for simplicity of operation. There is the disadvantage, though, of limited battery life which the power pack avoids.

A microphone that is well suited for musical productions is the "Sennheiser ME 80". This is a "shotgun" type microphone. A price of $230.00 may make the purchase of three of four of these mikes out of the question. Nevertheless, many companies will rent the same microphones on a daily or weekly basis. If three Sennheisers are mounted on stands in front of the stage edge, combined with two suspended over the middle of the stage left and right, the sonic coverage of the stage is quite adequate. The appearance of the microphones may be initially distracting to the audience, but will be of little consequence as the show proceeds.

A new microphone recently introduced to the market place which is presently being used by many theaters today is the "Crown PCC-160". Unlike the Sennhiesers, which are normally mounted on conventional mike stands, the "Crown" is designed to surface-mount on the stage. Aesthetically speaking, the "Crown's" surface-mount is much more appealing. For musicals, the manufacturer suggests that one evenly space three PCCs across the stage, about one foot from the edge. This should provide effective sound reinforcement through to the rear of most stages. If more reinforcement is still needed, additional PCCs can be mounted on panels overhead.

Many professional theater companies incorporate wireless microphones in their productions. In this case, the lead actors wear a microphone and small transmitter pack, which send a signal to a receiver connected to the amplification equipment. Along with the elimination of visible mikes and cables, the sound reinforcement effectiveness is greatly improved. For the majority of high school productions, however, the major cost of either purchasing or renting wireless microphones, combined with the complexity of their operation, makes their use impractical.

## Operating the Sound System

Once microphones, speakers, and amplification equipment are in place, the potential for destroying a production through improper operation of the equipment is still present.

The high levels of gain (volume levels of the amplifier) that are required in a musical can be a source of ear-piercing feedback. The proper equalization of the

system will do much to alleviate the problem. The equalizer, simply defined, is a component which can filter out or boost specific ranges of sound frequency. The proper equalization settings will vary depending on the performance location, and are instrumental in allowing the highest amount of gain to be used. Speaker-relative-to-microphone location is also critical. The further you place the microphones behind the sound reinforcement speakers, the greater the potential gain-before-feedback.

One might assume that once the system is properly set, the operator needs only to turn it on. In fact, he/she needs to be far more active than that. For maximum clarity and gain, the microphone nearest to the person singing should be the only one turned on. This requires an operator who knows the script to the point where he/she can make constant gain adjustments to individual microphones as they are needed. The operator should not wear headphones when monitoring sound levels, as they do not offer an accurate representation of what the audience is hearing. The sound system should be in place for at least the final week of rehearsals in order for the cast and crew to become accustomed to its operation.

If one desires a more thorough explanation of acoustical considerations in theater, the writers recommend Carol Waaser's book, *Sound and Music for the Theater*.[1]

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[1]Carol Waaser, *Sound and Music for the Theater* (New York: Richard Rosen Press, Inc., 1976).

## CHAPTER XI

## THE PERFORMANCES

Pre-performance Activities

All cast members will need to be present backstage approximately two hours prior to the performance. While this may seem like an unnecessary amount of lead time, the process of costuming, applying make-up, and looking after final details will require it.

The make-up room has the potential for creating some problems. Details as small as keeping make-up covered overnight, and cleaning make-up application equipment, will reduce the expenses of the production and efficiency of the make-up crew. The cast should be instructed and encouraged to apply their own base make-up, saving the make-up crew's time to make more detailed applications

Prior to a performance, especially the opening, there is often a considerable build-up of nervous energy. It is up to the production staff to maintain a calm in which this energy can be saved and channeled towards the performance.

During the last twenty minutes before the curtain rises, the cast should meet together. This time will be used for vocal warm-ups, final instructions, reading telegrams, and receiving final words of encouragement. For the duration of the performance, the only cast that should be backstage are those about to make an entry. The remainder should be in holding areas until notified by an assigned runner.

## The Performances Themselves

The term "dress rehearsal" is deceiving. The respondents to the questionnaires all indicated that the dress rehearsal played before an audience consisting of invited students from the feeder elementary schools, so in fact it must be categorized as a performance. The director should advise the cast that the audience reaction from elementary students will not be characteristic of performances to follow.

Nerves during performances will play a part in creating some small problems that seem inevitable at this stage. Forgotten lines may be handled in different ways. The use of a prompter is customary. The prompter is a student assigned to remain backstage, script in hand, ready to feed the appropriate line to the actor. Some students may use the prompter as a "crutch" which can result in more lines being forgotten. Another approach, favored by some directors, is to eliminate the prompter position. The students are forced to rely on each other for lost lines, thus encouraging some inventive improvisation at times. This can lead to some anxious moments as scenes are led astray; however, in most cases the mistakes are noticed only by the cast and not the audience.

Forgotten lyrics or verses are the stuff of nightmares for the music director. If the production incorporates a small combo, adjustments to the singer are quite easily accommodated. In a pit orchestra with student musicians, the conductor is advised to mouth or sing the lyrics to the actor enabling him/her to make the correction. There is little excuse for a musical selection to be stopped and restarted, except in a most direful situation.

The most common result of nervousness is increasing tempi. The music director needs to be aware of his/her own tendencies in this regard, and must always be ready to adjust to the nervous impulses of a cast member. The adjustment made to the singer is far less noticeable than the conductor forcing a change in tempo.

The questionnaire indicated that the number of performances scheduled for a production, including the dress rehearsal, was three to five. Depending on the number of performances planned, maintaining cast energy throughout the run can be a concern. Encourage the cast to eat and sleep well, and save any celebration until the last night. Prior to each performance, cast members should be reminded of their responsibility to their audience, and that each night's audience is deserving of their best effort.

At the principal writer's school, once a production is at the performance stage, with the exception of the musical director, the performance is student run. Light cues are called by a student lighting director and the backstage operations are all student operated. The director customarily sits in the audience, viewing the production, with no direction given to cast or crew. In the writers' view, increasing student responsibility has a tendency to intensify the concentration and effectiveness of both cast and crew.

## SUMMARY

The focus of this paper is on musical theater in the secondary high school. The first section of the paper introduces the notion that music teachers can reach their educational objectives via many different avenues, musical theater being one.

A rationale for incorporating musical theater in a secondary school is given. The impact that a theater program may have on the music program, teachers, students, and community is explored as part of this rationale. The writers conclude that the benefits to the secondary school and students are many, and that musical theater should be part of a well rounded performing arts program. Reference to a questionnaire that surveyed other Vancouver performing arts teachers is made in order to include the views of other practising teachers.

Following the rationale for developing musical theater in the secondary school, an approach to the process of producing a musical production is presented. Topics include such things as selecting an appropriate musical, budgeting, scheduling rehearsals and performances, and the rehearsal process itself. Each of the topics is an integral part of producing the musical.

A most important component of the production that must not be forgotten is the dedication of the participating teachers. The devotion of their extracurricular time, energy, and expertise is far too often taken for granted. It is very clear, however, that secondary school musical theater exists mainly because of this dedication. As a result, many students gain their fondest school day memories via the musical, and the enrichment to their lives far exceeds any educational goals or objectives found in course curriculum guides.

During the 1980s, the "back to basics" philosophy in education has compelled performing arts educators to demonstrate the important role of their curriculum in the school. With this in mind, the writers have described, in this paper, some of the positive effects of participation in musical theater. It is his recommendation that it would be of value for a future paper to explore these effects further. Through student questionnaires and follow-up tracking of participating students, one would be able to compile substantial evidence to support the already clear convictions of performing arts educators.

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## APPENDIX A

Sample Questionnaire

Jan 6th, 1988

Dear Colleague,

I am a music educator at Eric Hamber Secondary School in Vancouver. As part of my requirements for course work at the University of British Columbia, I am writing a paper on musical theater at the secondary level. To gain some insight into how teachers view and approach musical theater in their school, I thought it might be valuable to circulate a relatively short questionnaire. I would greatly appreciate your participation in this questionnaire. Of course, your responses would be held in anonymity.

The questions are, in the main, multiple choice. There are, however, a few that ask for longer responses. If, due to time constraints or any other reason, you are unable to finish the form I would be grateful for the return of a partially completed form.

Please feel free to circle more than one response on any of the multiple choice questions and add any comments you wish.

Many thanks for your time,

Chris Robinson

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Please circle the letter representing your best choice where appropriate.

1. Your subject specialty area is:

   a. music
   b. drama
   c. other _____

2. Your responsibility in the musical production is that of:

   a. director
   b. musical director
   c. producer
   d. choreographer
   e. other _____

3. How often does your school put on a musical theater production?

   a. more than once a year
   b. once a year
   c. every other year
   d. only occasionally
   e. never

4. If your response in the above question was e. never, you need not continue the questionnaire. Nonetheless, could you please briefly explain the reasons and forward the questionnaire to me.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. What is your main motivation for putting on a musical?

   a. school tradition
   b. to increase student enrollment in the performing arts areas.
   c. administrative pressure
   d. pressure from other members of the fine arts dept.
   e. self gratification
   f. to offer a well rounded performing arts program

6. What effect do you think presenting musical productions has on student enrollment in the fine arts subjects?

   a. increases enrollment in all performing arts areas.
   b. has no noticeable effect on enrollment.
   c. increases drama enrollment more than that of music.
   d. increases music enrollment more than that of drama.
   e. other

   _____

7. Do musical productions have any adverse effect on the rest of your program? If your response is yes, please explain.

   a. no
   b. yes

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

8. Do the musical productions put you in touch with students not enrolled in your subject areas?

   a. yes
   b. no

9. How do you think your administration views the role of musical theater in the school?

   a. as an integral part of a well rounded fine arts program.
   b. as a high profile P.R. event for the school.
   c. as a necessary event that must be endured.
   d. other

   _____

10. Do you feel your administration in general:
   a. is concerned that the musical realizes a profit?
   b. is more interested in the success of the show rather than a relatively small economic loss?
   c. other

   _____

11. What would be an approximate budget for an average musical at your school?

   a. $2000 or less
   b. $2000 to $4000
   c. $4000 to $6000
   d. $6000 to $8000
   e. other

   _____

12. Royalties aside, which area absorbs the largest portion of your budget?

   a. costumes
   b. sets
   c. lighting
   d. wages to nonteaching staff on production (eg., choreographer)
   e. make-up
   f. sound equipment
   g. other

   _____

13. Which area of your budget is most likely to go over budget?

   _____

14. Approximately how many school staff in total are associated with your musical productions?

a. less than five
b. between five and ten
c. between ten and fifteen
d. more than fifteen

15. The bulk of the production work is the responsibility of:

a. the drama teacher
b. the music teacher
c. the art teacher
d. outside professionals
e. outside volunteers
f. other

_____

16. Approximately how many hours of your extracurricular time are spent on a production from beginning to end?

a. less than 50
b. between 50 and 75
c. between 75 and 100
d. more than 100

17. Approximately how many weeks of school time do you set aside for rehearsing your musical production?

a. less than 8 weeks
b. 8 to 12 weeks
c. 12 to 16 weeks
d. 16 to 20 weeks
e. other

_____

18. When do you do the bulk of your rehearsing?

a. during class time
b. after school
c. in the evening
d. weekends
e. all of the above

19. Which extracurricular rehearsal time do you find most effective?

a. after school
b. evening
c. weekends
d. other

---

20. Do you employ any of the following nonteaching staff personnel?

a. choreographer
b. musical director
c. director
d. lighting director
e. art director
f. other

---

21. Do you incorporate outside musicians into the pit orchestra?

a. yes
b. no
c. depends on the musical

22. When you choose a musical do you:

a. select the musical prior to the auditions?
b. select the musical after an initial audition procedure to evaluate the student talent available?
c. either a. or b. depending on the circumstances

23. Which segment of your student population is invited to audition for the musical productions?

a. open to all grades
b. only open to students enrolled in performing arts courses
c. open only to senior grades

24. The lead roles are selected from:

a. all the students auditioning
b. only those students auditioning for a specific role

25. Do you assign lead roles understudies?

a. yes
b. no

26. How many performances do you plan for each production?

a. 3
b. 4
c. 5
d. 6
e. other

_____

27. Do you perform your dress rehearsal for an audience?

a. yes
b. no

28. If your response to the above was yes, who makes up this audience?

_____

29. Do you make extensive use of microphones on stage?

a. yes
b. no

30. When you mike a musical, what do you find is the most effective positioning of the mikes?

a. suspended above the stage
b. on the floor (mouse)
c. on stands at the front of stage
d. parabolic mike at front of stage
e. other

_____

31. Do you have a particular microphone model number that you would recommend as a stage mike?

_____

32. The most difficult aspect of putting on a high school musical is:

_____

_____

_____

_____

33. The most gratifying aspect of putting on a musical is:

_____

_____

_____

_____

34. Which of the musicals that you have been involved with would you ,in hindsight, say, "We should never have tried it"?

_____

35. Which of the musicals you have been involved with would you consider the most appropriate for a high school cast?

_____

36. List the three musicals that you have been most satisfied with at the high school level.

_____

_____

_____

37. Is there a question that you would have liked to have answered that wasn't included in this questionnaire?

_____

_____

## APPENDIX B

Recommendations for High School Musical Productions

Listed alphabetically below are ten musicals that, according to the writers and the results of the questionnaire respondents, are particularly well suited for high school production. Included is a brief description of each production and the name of the licensing agency whose addresses can be found in CHAPTER III.

| | |
|---|---|
| *The Boyfriend* (1954) | Music, lyrics, and book by Sandy Wilson. A 1954 spoof of 1920's musicals. This is an ensemble show requiring strong choreography. Music Theater International |
| *Brigadoon* (1947) | Music by Frederick Lowe, lyrics and book by Allan Jay Lerner A fantasy about a Scottish town that reawakens for one day every century. A singers' show. Trans-Whitmark Music Library |
| *Bye Bye Birdie* (1960) | Music by Charles Stouse, lyrics by Lee Adams, book by Michael Stewart A musical about teen fascination with rock and roll . Deals with the effect an Elvis Presley-type character has on the town of Sweet Apple, Ohio. 1950's choreography. Trans-Witmark Music Library |
| *Family Portrait* (1981) | Music, lyrics, book by Gary Poole. Concerns family relationships in a changing contemporary family. Music ranges from folk to rock and incorporates small combo. Musicians must be able to follow lead sheets. No controlling agency. Contact G.Poole at Eric Hamber Secondary, 5025 Willow St., Vancouver, British Columbia |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Hagar The Horrible* (1986) | Music, lyrics, book by Dave Burger An original production based on the comic strip "Hagar The Horrible" No controlling agency. Contact Dave Burger at Kitsilano Secondary, 2550 West 10th ave., Vancouver, British Columbia |
| *H.M.S. Pinafore* (1878) | Gilbert and Sullivan production. One of the simplest G. and S. operettas to produce. Not only is it the shortest of them, but also it makes comparatively fewer musical and dramatic demands on the cast than other G. and S. productions.<br>Samuel French |
| *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1971) | Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber, lyrics by Tim Rice, book by Tom O'Hargan, based on the New Testament. A rock opera based on the last seven days of Christ.<br>Trans-Witmark Music Library |
| *The King and I* (1951) | Music by Richard Rogers, lyrics and book by Oscar Hammerstein II, based on Margaret Landon's novel *Anna and the King of Siam*. The story follows the experiences of an English governess in Siam. The costuming may be expensive.<br>The Rogers and Hammerstein Library |
| *Where's Charley?* (1948) | Music and lyrics by Frank Loesser, book by George Abbott, based on a play, *Charlie's Aunt* by Brandon Thomas. Deals with transvestite misunderstandings. A strong male lead is required.<br>Music Theater International |

*Working* (1978)

From the book by Studs Terkel. Adapted by Stephen Schwartz and Nina Faso. Songs by Craig Carnelia, Mick Grant, Mary Rodgers, Susan Birkenhead, Stephen Schwartz, and James Taylor. Dance music by Michelle Bourman. A musical based on the day-to-day lives and thoughts of ordinary working people. Requires strong individual performers. Incorporates small combo. The variety in musical styles is very appealing. Music Theater International

## APPENDIX C

Audition Form

NAME_____

AGE_____ HEIGHT_____

HOMEROOM CLASS_____

MEMBERSHIP IN SCHOOL CLUBS OR TEAMS_____

_____

DO YOU SING?_____ DANCE?_____

DO YOU READ MUSIC?_____

DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO CAN HELP YOU AT HOME ON YOUR VOCAL PARTS?_____

LIST PREVIOUS PERFORMING EXPERIENCE._____

_____

_____

_____

---

FOR AUDITIONERS ONLY

RANGE: COMMENTS:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

## APPENDIX D

Parent Acknowledgement Form

Dear Parent/Guardian,

As you know, your son/daughter has successfully auditioned for a role in Eric Hamber's musical production of *A Family Portrait*. Over 150 students auditioned for the production and the cast number has now been set at 40. The production team's main concern is that the selected students will be able to maintain the rehearsal schedule. Rehearsals will take place 4 days a week excluding Fridays. Each cast member will be required to attend a minimum of 3 per week, (see attached rehearsal outline). The reheasals will start at 3:30 p.m. and will end at 5:30 p.m. During the last two weeks prior to the performances, rehearsals will run into the evening, and all cast members will be required to attend.

We realize that absences due to illness and emergencies will be unavoidable. We hope, however, that you will be able to schedule other appointments, etc., on nonrehearsal days. While the time commitment is quite extensive, we believe the experience of participating in this production will be a very positive one for your son/daughter. Please fill out the form below and return it to the school by Monday, Oct. 5th. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call either Mr. Robinson or Mr. Denos at 261-9364.

Many thanks for your support,

C. Robinson

M. Denos

.....

As parent/guardian of (son/daughter) _____. I understand the time commitment required for participation in the musical production *A Family Portrait*, and grant my permission for him/her to participate.

Signature of parent/guardian

_____